



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Midland Highway 10-year Action Plan- Melton Mowbray to Lovely Banks

Brought up by Mrs Rylah and ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

Mr Valentine (Chair)
Mrs Rattray

House of Assembly

Ms Butler
Mrs Petrusma
Mrs Rylah

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	BACKGROUND.....	3
3	PROJECT COSTS	5
4	EVIDENCE	6
5	DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE.....	23
6	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	24

1 INTRODUCTION

The Committee has the honour to report to the House of Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* on the -

Midland Highway 10-year Action Plan - Melton Mowbray to Lovely Banks

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works to improve safety for drivers on a 6km stretch of the Midland Highway from Melton Mowbray to Lovely Banks Road, and which is bounded by the already completed Kempton to Melton Mowbray works and the South of Spring Hill works.
- 2.2 The *Midland Highway 10-year Action Plan - Melton Mowbray to Lovely Banks* project is a component of the *Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan*, a 10-year plan with a commitment of a total of \$500 million from Australian and Tasmanian Governments to upgrade the Midland Highway.
- 2.3 The *AusRAP Star Rating Australia's National Network of Highways 2013* report found that the majority of the Midland Highway rated either only 1 or 2-star, in its 5-star safety rating scale. The key objectives of Tasmania's 10-Year Action Plan are to undertake safety improvements to provide a minimum of a 3 star AusRAP rating for the entire length of the Midland Highway, integrated with additional safe overtaking opportunities and a staged approach to capacity improvements.
- 2.4 The Midland Highway upgrade projects utilise the 'Safe System' approach, which has been adopted by all Australian state and territory road authorities to achieve a minimum 3 star AusRAP rating. The 'Safe System' approach recognises that people will make mistakes which result in crashes and, therefore, road infrastructure needs to be designed to take account of these errors.
- 2.5 Key safety measures taken under this approach on the Midland Highway are the separation of opposing traffic flows through the installation of a flexible safety barrier within the central median, an increase in safe overtaking opportunities through provision of alternating 2+1 lane arrangements, road widening works including extending sealed shoulders and junction upgrades.
- 2.6 The proposed works include the following elements/safety treatments:
 - Separation of northbound and southbound traffic through the provision of a flexible safety barrier within a central median, to eliminate the risk of head-on collisions;
 - Additional safe overtaking opportunities through the provision of an alternating 2+1 lane arrangement, which has been specifically designed for this project to cater for heavy vehicle speeds;
 - Upgrades to both the Muddy Plains Road and Lovely Banks Road intersections, to provide safer access to adjacent land and to provide turning opportunities for emergency vehicles and general traffic; and

- Road widening works to allow for a safer road cross-section, with the following specifications:
 - lane widths of 3.5m;
 - sealed shoulder widths of 1.0m to 2.0m;
 - 2.1m central median (housing the flexible safety barrier); and
 - verges of 0.5m, increasing to 1.5m to accommodate side safety barriers where these are required.

3 PROJECT COSTS

- 3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$17.7 million.

The total project outturn cost for the *Midland Highway 10-year Action Plan - Melton Mowbray to Lovely Banks* project is \$16.8 million for the P50 case and \$19.7 million for the P90 case.

The following tables detail the current p50 and p90 cost estimates for the project:

P50 Cash Flow	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	2020 / 2021	2021 / 2022
Sub Total (annual)	\$ -	\$ 630,000	\$ 10,694,655	\$ 5,513,445	\$ -
Accumulative Total	\$ -	\$ 630,000	\$ 11,324,655	\$ 16,838,100	\$ 16,838,100-

P90 Cash Flow	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	2020 / 2021	2021 / 2022
Sub Total	\$	\$ 630,000	\$ 12,558,173	\$ 6,516,878	\$
Accumulative Total	\$	\$ 630,000	\$ 13,188,173	\$ 19,705,051	\$ 19,705,051

4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Thursday, 27 June last with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to the Kempton Memorial Hall, Kempton, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:

- Vanessa King, Project Management Team Leader, Project Services, Department of State Growth;
- Craig Tarbotton, Project Manager, Project Services, Department of State Growth;
- John Jones;
- Don Jones;
- Kylie Donaghy, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association; and
- Andrew McShane.

Overview

4.2 Mr Tarbotton provided a brief overview of the proposed works:

Mr TARBOTTON - Just to summarise the project, as mentioned, the project is 6 kilometres of highway upgrade along the Midland Highway. It is part of the greater or broader Midland Highway upgrade program. The objective of the Midland Highway program is to create an AusRAP three-star highway, a safety program. The configuration to achieve the three stars, the lane configuration, is what we call a two plus one, so that provides overtaking lane opportunities.

The project starts approximately 250 metres north of the current Highland Lakes Road and finishes one kilometre north of the Lovely Banks Road junction. We have climbing lanes in both directions, both north and south, and we have a significant property north of the project into the Lovely Banks property itself. There are a number of smaller property accesses positioned along that 6 kilometre section which provide access to the Lovely Banks property. The project does not impact on any threatened vegetation communities outside of the road corridor. We have adjusted the geometry of the highway so that we avoid the acquisition of private land. Within the body of the project we have a left turn into the Muddy Plains Road. That functionality is remaining as it currently stands so we are still providing a left turn lane into Muddy Plains Road.

That is essentially a broad summary of the project.

Overtaking Opportunities

4.3 The Committee noted that the project would result in a reduction in the length of overtaking opportunities, with a reduction in lanes from 4 (2 in each direction) to 3 (in an alternating 2+1 arrangement). The Committee sought further comment from the Department of State Growth witnesses on this issue:

CHAIR - One of the main issues here is that it appears that there is less opportunity for overtaking than what is currently available. Perhaps you could address that particular issue. I know that is of interest to members.

Mr TARBOTTON - at the moment we are in the south bound direction reducing the lane length, the overtaking lane, currently considered an overtaking lane, by 1.3 kilometres. I would like to clarify that. With this project these lanes that we are discussing are technically called climbing lanes. An overtaking lane is predominantly positioned on a flat terrain to allow standard vehicles to overtake the slower vehicles. In this instance, the function of the lane is to allow the heavy vehicles to move to one side and allow the standard vehicles to pass by. Technically they are a climbing lane.

In the south bound direction we are reducing the length by 1.3, and in the north bound direction we are reducing the current lane length by 400 metres, 0.4 kilometres. That is not 1.3 kilometres off one end of the south bound or 400 metres off the north bound. It is distributed over both ends so the start and finish points in both directions are adjusted, modified slightly.

I would like to elaborate on that. We have designed those lane lengths to not affect the travelling public. The goal for us is to ensure that heavy vehicles can still use the highway efficiently and light vehicles can also operate on the road with efficiency and effectively. The lane lengths have been designed so that at the starting point heavy vehicles will be at an above average speed. We are governed by our national design guideline. We comply with those national design guidelines as well as our own internal design guidelines. The starting speed that we have adopted for both the lanes in south and north direction is greater than the minimum that is allowed under the national design guideline.

Similarly, the end point of both lanes, both north and south, has been identified or adopted so that the speed of the heavy vehicle will be greater than the allowed minimum speed under the national design guideline. What we are trying to provide here is an outcome or a product that is better than the minimum allowed under the national, whilst managing our budget constraints. We have achieved that.

All the lane lengths, whilst they are shorter, and they are shorter, they are not substandard by any means. They satisfy all the national design guidelines and we believe they will still allow the users of the highway to use that effectively.

CHAIR - To continue to focus on this, the issue of safety, you were saying during our site inspection, that is of paramount importance.

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes.

- 4.4 The Committee noted that while safety appeared to be the key driver behind the proposed works, it seemed counterintuitive that the length of overtaking lanes over the site of the works would be reduced. Under questioning from the Committee on this matter, the witnesses from the Department of State Growth highlighted that the Melton Mowbray to Lovely Banks project was just one among a large number of upgrades under the Midland Highway 10-year Action Plan, and trade-offs needed to be managed to ensure the entire upgrade could be completed within the allocated budget. As such, the emphasis needed to be on the significant safety improvements across the upgrades as an integrated package and achieving this within the budget provided, rather than focusing solely on measures within individual projects:

CHAIR -If you could put that in the context of the whole project and what is happening here that would be appreciated.

Mr TARBOTTON -Certainly. It is correct that within this project that current climbing lanes and overtaking lane lengths are being reduced. That is clear. We are. However, as far as overtaking opportunities along the entire Midland Highway, we are not reducing the opportunities to overtake. Let me just clarify that.

CHAIR -In this particular instance, it seems like there is not going to be much gain in safety for the reduction of overtaking opportunities. Do you want to comment on the safety aspects and what it is actually delivering, compared to what there is currently?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, certainly. We are referring to a project specific at the moment, but I cannot avoid referring to the Midland Highway program. We have a task of upgrading the entire highway to a minimum three-star safety level. The way we achieve that is by putting a central flexible safety barrier in the highway. The reason we are putting the barrier in the centre of the highway is that the predominant fatalities are due to head-on collisions. That is what we are trying to limit.

For this particular project, there has not been any head-on fatalities, so one might say that we are not necessarily improving that. But what we are creating is a driving environment that is consistent from the south to the north of the state. That means, that as drivers travel through this project, they can comfortably rely upon that their awareness does not have to change of the environment. In the event that an errant vehicle did try to move across the highway, we have that central barrier there, so we are improving safety outcomes. For this particular project, there has not been an accident or a head-on collision, but we cannot design for that. We have to design for what we believe might happen and we are putting a central barrier in there to prevent that if it did happen. We cannot prevent the errant vehicle from becoming errant, but what we can prevent is the impact that errant vehicle has on an adjacent motorist, and that is the central barrier.

CHAIR - The shoulders? Are they changing?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes. The Midland Highway program, the entire Midland Highway has adopted a 2 plus 1 configuration with a central median, that is 2.1 metres wide and 2 metre shoulders. The 2 metre shoulders provide multiple functions. One is, it allows breakdown vehicles to pull over to one side and allow the traffic to pass by. It also allows a vehicle, if it becomes errant, meaning it starts to leave the highway lane, it has sufficient width to correct itself before impacting on either the adjacent land or the barrier, the shoulder, so yes.

Ms BUTLER -Here we have a long lane which is being minimised, I understand that, but I do not really understand - to me it does not make much sense, that is all.

Ms RATTRAY - To take it away when it is already there.

Ms KING -If you think about the road as it currently stands in the sections, there are sections that are currently four lanes wide which, once the project is completed, will be three lanes wide. They will have a central median and the wider shoulders as well. Some of those sections, if we were to maintain the length of the overtaking lanes as very long, plus the medians plus the shoulders, would involve significant additional expenditure of public funds which would not result in a commensurate safety benefit for that expenditure. It is important that the Midland Highway 10-year upgrade program as a whole manages trade-offs up and down the highway to make sure that we don't overdo one section because then you run a risk of under-doing another section.

- 4.5 Noting this justification, the Committee resolved to seek further information from the Department of State Growth on the length and number of safe overtaking opportunities available in the sections of the Midland Highway that had already been upgraded under the Midland Highway 10-year Action Plan, both prior to, and post, the completed projects. The Department of State Growth provided the following information in response, noting the significant increase in the number and length of safe overtaking opportunities:

There are 17 northbound formal overtaking opportunities totaling approximately 25.3km that have been constructed and are operational.

There are 17 southbound formal overtaking opportunities totaling approximately 27.0km that have been constructed and are operational.

Of the areas that have been constructed, the following were overtaking opportunities available prior to upgrade:

- 9 northbound formal overtaking opportunities totaling approximately 13.6km
- 8 southbound formal overtaking opportunities totaling approximately 14.8km

There has been a substantial increase in formal overtaking opportunities in the projects constructed to date.¹

- 4.6 Mr Andrew McShane is the main adjacent landowner affected by the proposed works. Mr McShane expressed his concern about the reduction in the length of the overtaking lanes:

Mr McSHANE -As Mark identified as well, ... the south bound climbing lane heading south from Lovely Banks Road that they want to shorten that. Mark said it exactly right, that just does not make sense. Do not shorten it when you are starting to head up the hill and make everyone slow down behind a slow-moving truck before they all overtake. At least if you are going to shorten something, shorten it on the down hill, do not shorten it on the uphill. It does not make any sense at all.

.... That is a vision thing. Why would you do it?

- 4.7 Mr Don Jones also expressed his concerns with the proposed road cross section (specifically, the reduction from 4 lanes to 3 lanes) and the associated reduction in length of the overtaking lanes. Mr Jones noted that, in his opinion, a 4 lane, dual carriageway arrangement was the safest option, and that the current policy of an alternating 2+1 arrangement was a retrograde step:

Mr Donald JONES - it is not really pursuing the safety issues we are looking for. My reason for saying that relates particularly to the over the hill section where we currently have a four-lane section of highway.

.... The three-lane highway is in the Ark before it starts.

I would ask State Growth, ... why have four-lane sections in different sections of the Midland Highway been reduced to three? The ultimate for road safety in everybody's mind is a four-lane highway because it covers the needs if there is an accident or crash or things like that. Designs where we are closing down four lanes is taking us backwards; it is not moving us forward.

.... The safety aspect of the highway has been taken away in areas where it existed. In this area here, over the hill, and that is pretty particular because you are going up and down in a very short area, with heavy transport going both ways. To take away the four lanes in that particular area is nothing short of a disaster.

- 4.8 After hearing from the other witnesses, the Committee sought to explore further with the Department of State Growth witnesses the rationale behind the reduction in lanes from 4 to 3, the reduction in overtaking lane lengths and the starting point for the south bound overtaking lane. Mr Tarbotton and Ms King provided further detail on the reasoning behind the proposed design and explained the trade-offs made in the design process:

CHAIR - The south-bound climbing lane. If you are turning left out of Lovely Banks Road going south or if you are travelling from the north, why have a single lane there when quite clearly the trucks are going to be slowing down significantly?

Mr TARBOTTON - The starting position of the climbing lane heading south has been determined when a heavy vehicle reaches a certain speed. That speed is above average; above the minimum design. The current climbing lane starts well before where we are starting, a few hundred metres before we are starting, and they are currently at 110.

CHAIR - In the design, it is starting earlier than what it currently is?

¹ Response from the Department of State Growth to the Committee's request for additional information, dated 26 July 2019, Page 2.

Ms KING - The other way around.

Mr TARBOTTON - It is starting later. The current overtaking lane starts earlier further into the flat, further down the hill than what our proposed design will. Our proposed design, again the starting point does appear less than ideal but it is not because it has been designed so that the speed of a heavy vehicle when it enters that or when the climbing lane starts are already faster than what the minimum is allowed. Yes, it is slower than what they currently are, but what we currently have, to use an expression, is gold plating. We do not have the funds to gold plate our Midland Highway, so we have to make decisions. Some of those decisions will not be accepted by people. All we can do is try to explain them. Perhaps in our stakeholder engagement, we have not performed successfully. But our design, our climbing lane lengths, are better than the minimum, better than what is allowed under the national design guideline. They are less than what is currently there, however what is currently there is gold plating. We would love to provide the best, but we cannot do that.

I know Andrew feels that we should bring our new climbing lane back to where the current one starts but there is insufficient traffic volume coming out of Lovely Banks Road to justify that. The heavy vehicles coming down the hill from Launceston are currently doing 110 kilometres per hour when they get to the junction and they will still do 100 when they get to that junction. As they travel south up the hill, they will get to a speed of, I don't want to use it, but above the minimum design speed before the climbing lane is allowed. That speed they will achieve is better than the minimum allowed under the design guide. We believe we have satisfied it. We have tried to keep everybody happy including those who issue our budgets.

Mr SHELTON - Before we get off that one. I accept your engineering argument for that, yes. From a point of view of a traveller on the Midlands Highway, and I have overtaken many vehicles where that overtaking lane starts and I am a mechanic by trade, trucks now have more powerful engines, they can get up to road speed quicker and that sort of thing. Using your logical argument, we would not have overtaking lanes because one day they will be able to keep up at 110 and you will not need to overtake them. Therefore, it is not specifically the commercial traffic that is an issue.

If you have been stuck behind a slow-moving vehicle travelling south down towards Lovely Banks, it is a single lane next to where the fatality happened, all the way from the top of the hill. You are following a caravan, an 80 k driver, an L-driver all doing 80 kilometres per hour or even slower at times, and I know you are only deferring the overtaking by 150 metres until you get up the hill, but there maybe half a kilometre of vehicles behind that slow-moving vehicle. Therefore, any length you can get is an advantage because more vehicles can get around and you will have less frustration on the road.

I would not be arguing it from a commercial truck perspective. They will always keep up with the speed limit coming down there and around and yes, your argument they would be slowing down by the time they get half-way up the hill and you would get around them. But there are many other users on the road and many other reasons why the road traffic is travelling slower than only the commercial side.

Mr TARBOTTON - You are correct. We have chosen a speed which is hopefully a compromise. We believe it satisfies everybody. The heavy vehicle will be at such a speed that the number of vehicles behind it will be less. They should not be queued up behind them too much because the climbing lane starts at a point closer to the base of the hill and technically we are allowed to. We could have started it further up the hill and still satisfied our design guideline but that would have annoyed everybody.

We have taken a point that is a compromise. It does not start at the base of the hill where it currently does because we cannot afford that. We have tried to adopt a compromise where those vehicles behind the heavy vehicle, there won't be so many of them that they become a concern to us. I hope we have tried to satisfied the majority.

- 4.9 Subsequent to the hearing, the Department of State Growth confirmed to the Committee in writing that, based on the concerns expressed about the reduction

in the length of the southbound overtaking lane, it had been redesigned and extended:

.....the design has been amended to accommodate another of Mr McShane's concerns. The length of the south bound climbing lane has been extended by approximately 350m, closer toward Lovely Banks Road. This improved functionality has been provided to minimize the difference in travel speed between heavy vehicles and light vehicles.²

Upgrade to the Lovely Banks Intersection

4.10 The Committee understood that there would be significant safety improvements made at the Lovely Banks property, including a new property access, and improvements to the Lovely Banks Road junction. The proposed works would provide a new access to the Lovely Banks property approximately 100 metres further south from the current property access, and aligned more closely to Lovely Banks Road, and provide extended 3m sealed shoulders to facilitate safe left turns into the Lovely Banks property and Lovely Banks Road. Noting the changes and the impact on local landowners and local traffic, the Committee sought further detail on the proposed works at Lovely Banks:

Mr SHELTON - I have a quick question on some impacts, not on flora or fauna, but on the human activity on the area. The main intersection of the whole design is the Lovely Banks road intersection and its changes, and the significant change to access to the Lovely Banks property itself. Can you talk the committee through the design issues around that section and your involvement with the local landowners and that particular design? That is the critical design from a farming perspective of the whole project.

Mr TARBOTTON - You are correct. Possibly the greatest impact we have on the project is on the entrance to this property. At the moment, what we are showing is that landowner has both light and heavy vehicle movements in and out of the property. We have designed that junction - it is a junction between both a private landowning and a public road on the opposite side - to allow heavy vehicles, which has the larger turning radius -

Mr SHELTON - Including B-doubles? It has always been an issue where radius is not quite good enough for B-doubles to turn in and so on, and vehicles always getting longer and larger.

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct. As a minimum design for B-double movements now, we expect or anticipate that into particularly farms. We do not design for B-triples. They are not allowed in the state, to let you know that. They may be in the future, but certainly not now.

That entrance caters for B-double movements. They have all-direction access. That means they can turn left in, left out, right out et cetera. They can cross the highway and enter into Lovely Banks property. That was a requirement of the landowners, a fairly strict requirement, and I believe we have achieved that requirement.

That junction, in itself, allows for emergency vehicles, fire and ambulance et cetera to do a 180-degree turn within the lane widths without actually having to enter into private property. That has also been allowed for at that junction.

Heading north and turning left into the property, we provide what we call a basic left turn. Essentially that is a 3-metre shoulder. We have two metres, which is standard. We now provide three metres of sealed shoulder. It is not a dedicated left turn; it is a basic left turn.

² Response from the Department of State Growth to the Committee's second request for additional information, dated 8 August 2019, page 1.

The number of vehicles turning into that property does not justify a dedicated left turn. A dedicated left turn is wider, longer and, given the volume of vehicles both coming in and out, a basic left turn, a 3-metre-wide shoulder, is sufficient in model.

When you are heading south and you need to turn right into Lovely Banks property, we are providing a dedicated right turn. That is currently there so we are not changing that.

When you are heading south from Launceston and you wish to turn left into Lovely Banks Road, we are providing a basic left turn, the same as if you were turning into the property. Again, that is a 3-metre-wide shoulder, a very large wide shoulder. It is not a dedicated lane. Again, we based that decision on the volume of traffic turning in; we based it on crash history records. There are no crash history records showing that vehicles turning left into Lovely Banks Road have been collided with from the rear, so that again supports the use of a basic left turn.

For the Lovely Banks property itself, full functionality has been provided across the highway and all-directional travel.

Mr SHELTON - For anybody who has looked at the plan or, if they have any time, looks at the Hansard to read about this in the future, they may look at that intersection and say, 'Well, it is not completely opposite each other. Why would they not align that intersection?'

A quick response from you as you have already indicated to the committee when we were out looking at it, but it would be preferable to get it on the Hansard.

Mr TARBOTTON - The junction has been designed to the Australian national design guidelines. Please do not have a concern about the configuration of that junction. The reason the two accesses are not directly opposite each other is because there is a very large physical constraint - a vertical drop - directly opposite Lovely Banks.

To avoid that, we have moved the entrance to Lovely Banks slightly north of Lovely Banks Road. It is not directly opposite.

Mr SHELTON - It still fits in with the guidelines of what it needs to?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct.

- 4.11 Another of Mr McShane's concerns related to the sight distance at the proposed new access to the Lovely Banks property. Mr McShane, while conceding the proposed new access was an improvement, was of the opinion that moving the property access would not improve visibility, and therefore safety, for vehicles exiting his property. Mr McShane suggested a combination of improving the horizontal alignment on the highway at this point, coupled with a dedicated left-in turn lane to his property and left-out acceleration lane from his property, as measures to address these concerns:

... .. even though it is an improvement for our entrance, it does bring it a lot close to that cutting which is really poor sight distance.

... .. There is cutting there and they have looked at it a number of times. It is interesting. State Growth has been to us over the past five years or so a couple of times saying, 'Can we do some shaving off of more of that cutting?', so they need to do some acquisition. We obviously said, 'Yes, that is no problem', because it is going to make the sight distance better for us.

CHAIR - You are talking about on the north side of the road or the south-east side of the road?

Mr McSHANE - The western side of the road, south of the Lovely Banks intersection.

CHAIR - Just south of your cattle underpass?

Mr McSHANE - Yes. There is quite a big cutting there and very little sight distance coming out of Lovely Banks Road or Lovely Banks entrance. State Growth has been to us a few times saying they are looking at shaving off some more of that cutting so it increases the sight

distance. We have said yes, no problem, because it is going to be an improvement for us and all the people who work with us. Those couple of times, for some reason, they have shelved the project, or then gone back and said it is probably not necessary. We have said okay, whatever, that is fine. We did not suggest it to start with, so it was not like our suggestion that we need more sight distance. They suggested it and then looked at it and said no, we do not need to do it.

Now the new entrance comes back south another 100 metres -

CHAIR - You are saying it is not improving the situation?

Mr McSHANE - It is not improving the sight distance situation. All we are saying is, for that specific situation where there is hardly any sight distance, at least have a dedicated left-hand shoulder, get off the road safely and also, heading north out of Lovely Banks entrance, an acceleration lane so to speak. Whether it is people coming out of Lovely Banks farm or whether it is people coming from Lovely Banks Road and heading north, don't funnel them into one lane when there is hardly any sight distance from north-bound trucks coming down there. Maybe do more like what they have done here at Mood Food where they have made an accelerating lane which just ends up turning into an overtaking lane. That seems to work really well, that merge lane which ends up being an acceleration lane. It is a bit novel but I think it was a good outcome there and they should do that where they do not have sight distance.

CHAIR - Some would say that that will increase the dollar value of the project to the point where it might be detrimental to somewhere else on the whole project north to south. What I am asking you is, do you see this as a safety issue or do you see it more of a nice to have because it simply will reduce people's travel time? Do you understand what I am saying?.....Are you saying that provides something, or it is a convenient thing or are you saying it is safer?

Mr McSHANE - It would be safer and it is nice to be safer, so that is what it is. If there was a really good field of view, like there is at Muddy Plains Road, that is the safest entrance anywhere. You can see all the way up and down the highway so there has never been an accident there because the field of view is so good. If the field of view was good, I would not even be talking about it. It is to do with safety because the sight distance is very short and you are dealing with trucks coming down quite a steep hill trying to get a run up to go up Spring Hill and you are bottling into one lane.

- 4.12 Noting the concerns raised by Mr McShane, the Committee sought the Department of State Growth witnesses' views on the matter. Mr Tarbotton indicated that the Department's modelling had shown that the sight distance at the new Lovely Banks access was safe, and as such it was not necessary to make any changes to the horizontal alignment in that area. Mr Tarbotton did, however, assure the Committee that he would ask the designers to re-check the sight distance requirements at this point to ensure it was safe:

CHAIR - Shaving off the cutting just south of Lovely Banks Road going north. As you are coming down toward the Lovely Banks Road travelling north there is a cutting and it is being talked about shaving that back so that increases sight lines. That was raised by Mr McShane. Do you have a comment on why that cannot occur? Why it is not desirable? What is the reasoning?

Mr TARBOTTON - First of all, it can occur, we can do that. However, it has been modelled as not necessary. I know that is not what Andrew wants to hear. A previous project manager might have said, yes, we will do that; I can't comment for the previous person. We have modelled that it is not required, it is not necessary. We have a requirement to make sure our highway designs are safe for the use that is expected and this is safe.

I will give this commitment: we will go back to our designers and we will consider whether that has to be, we will triple check it. We have already double checked it and we have responded it is not necessary. We will go back and triple check it. If it is found that we are incorrect, we will adjust that. That is my commitment to you. I am fairly confident that we do

not have to. That is not going to appease the person asking the question. Andrew still won't be happy. I understand that but, again, I have to get back to this: we have constraints. We satisfy the safety requirements, we must. We also have to satisfy a budget, we are. As projects I believe we are achieving everything we are asked.

CHAIR - Do you think taking out the trees is sufficient enough to provide the sight lines necessary?

Mr TARBOTTON - The trees will improve what is currently there. Andrew mentioned that by moving the entrance to the property further south by 100 metres might worsen it. I understand it will not. We differ on that view point. The translocating or the moving of the entrance 100 metres south should improve that sight distance. Again, I will go back to our designers and I will sit down and ask them to triple check this. If we have made an error, we will stand up and say we have made an error. I do not believe we have. The trees grow where they grow. We have trees that grow within a few years and they are a full-sized tree - it is one of our biggest banes - we will remove them because it will be an improvement.

- 4.13 The Department of State Growth subsequently provided the following information in response to commitment made by Mr Tarbotton:

In accordance with the commitment to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works hearing, the Department's design engineers have re-affirmed (triple checked) that the current proposed design satisfies the sight distance requirements of the national road design guideline (Austroads).³

Flexible Safety Barrier

- 4.14 The Committee noted the policy relating to the installation of flexible safety barriers and their effectiveness in reducing fatalities and serious injuries, by preventing head-on collisions and providing protection from roadside hazards. However, the Committee sought to explore whether the barriers themselves could present their own safety concerns:

Ms BUTLER - I have a question around the central safety barriers. You are talking about the main reason for those central safety barriers is the prevention of head-on collisions. If you look at it from a different perspective, can those central safety barriers contribute to other car incidents and potentially cause fatalities as well?

Mr TARBOTTON - The answer is 'yes', but we have to prioritise. When you impact the flexible safety barrier, you will sustain some injury, to the vehicle or even the person. What we are trying to do is minimise the scale of the impact. By providing the central safety barrier we should prevent fatalities. It does not mean the person who impacts that barrier will not walk away with an injury. They might; it depends on how they are driving. It depends on the vehicle type. A motorcyclist that impacts that central barrier will sustain a greater injury than a person within a vehicle. We cannot avoid that, but what we can do is minimise the fatalities.

- 4.15 The Committee sought to understand whether there was sufficient space between the central safety barrier and roadside barriers to allow drivers, whose vehicle may have broken down or need to change a tyre, to pull over and for traffic to pass safely:

Ms BUTLER - Can I ask a supplementary question to your question? With the shoulder area being two metres and you have a barrier on this side and then you have the barrier in the middle as well as the roads, there is not really anywhere for someone to go. For instance, if you have to pull over to change a tyre on a light vehicle or if you have a heavy vehicle and you need to check your stock or potentially change a tyre on a heavy vehicle, is there enough space

³ Response from the Department of State Growth to the Committee's second request for additional information, dated 8 August 2019, page 1.

to do that at all if you have got the barrier here on the left? It does happen. You have the barrier here as well as the one in the middle.

Ms KING - In some locations. Not all locations.

Mr TARBOTTON - You have the 2 metre shoulder where most of your vehicle can sit if you need to; depending on one or two lanes adjacent to you, you have another metre before your central barrier. There is sufficient lane,

Ms BUTLER - But if you are in a single lane, which this will have going up from Lovely Banks, Muddy Plains? I am concerned that if a vehicle, a heavy or even a light vehicle, has to have a tyre changed, will there be enough space there for the driver to do that safely? I am sure that will happen at some stage.

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, it does happen. You are correct. A light vehicle will fit in that two metres. A vehicle will. They are about 2 metres wide, an average standard vehicle. A heavier vehicle will not, but a heavier vehicle has more than four wheels so it is expected that if a heavier vehicle loses a wheel or loses a tyre, not loses as one runs free but blows a tyre, they will then continue driving until there is a safe opportunity to pull over. We provide those at regular intervals up the highway, currently every 5 kilometres. That is what we would expect. A light vehicle cannot travel too far on three tyres but they can fit in. Yes, it is still hazardous but it is certainly better than what we are currently providing, which is 1 metre.

Ms BUTLER - But the barrier is not there is it, at the moment? It is hemming them in, isn't it?

Mr TARBOTTON - No. The barrier does not occur the entire length. It only occurs when there is a hazard to the motorist.

Ms KING - The left-hand barrier, the side barrier, is only there when there is something really nasty on the other side of it, like a big drop-off.

Mr TARBOTTON - The highway configuration is a 3.5 metre lane, 2 metre shoulder and then a 1 metre gravel verge. Beyond the verge, it becomes road reserve with drains et cetera. Where there is no hazard to the vehicle, we do not put a barrier. That means that if you happen to blow a tyre - hopefully not near a barrier - you have the shoulder plus the verge, plus the road reserve to pull over. If you happen to blow a tyre against a barrier, then yes, that is regrettable but you still have two metres.

4.16 Mr John Jones suggested that the provision of wire safety barriers impedes access for emergency vehicles, especially if there are large vehicles on the shoulder:

Mr John JONES - Health and safety means if you have an ambulance or special services vehicle, every minute might mean a life-or-death situation. With this design, they have no capacity for emergency services in any way to pass what I call 'an over-dimensional load' that has broken down or trucks with seizures of engines and other parts. A wire rope - we have not learned from that - is the divider. While we are talking of this project I am talking of the wire rope situation at the top of Dysart Hill where the truck's actual tyres climbed the wire rope, the vehicle turned upside down and the driver was killed. That road was closed for over five hours. We were fortunate because at the top of Dysart, the traffic was able to be directed through and coming into Kempton. That was five hours. That is only one incident and there are more, but we will not go into that because I am afraid State Growth has not learnt from previous incidents already. We have had one at Mood Food as well. They have not learnt or admitted an error in design and actual practical use.

CHAIR - You are talking in particular about the wire rope barriers?

Mr John JONES - The wire rope and changing to one lane with no access past it.

Ms BUTLER - When you talked about safety and examples of accidents, I have seen an accident in the section of the road where an ambulance had to go up one side of the road and then turn around and come back. Have you seen any examples of that as well?

Mr John JONES - Our problem now is what they call '3-star' safety. They are putting barriers down the side and barriers down the middle, where before we could go around or pull over to the verge and go around. We cannot do that anymore.

You imagine, in this 1 kilometre, with one lane and you are two-thirds the way up and you have a kilometre of traffic behind you, how are you going to get past, to the ambulance?

CHAIR - How is the ambulance going to get past those cars, is that what you are saying?

Mr John JONES - Yes. That is correct. There is physically no ability to do that in width, and that is provided it is not an over-dimensional truck, of which we have quite a few. They block 80 per cent of it.

- 4.17 Noting the concerns raised regarding access for emergency vehicles in areas where flexible safety barriers are present, the Committee sought a response from the Department of State Growth witnesses. They indicated that, in an emergency, the flexible safety barrier can be lowered or removed, and emergency services are trained for and have the equipment to do this:

CHAIR - The issue of fire trucks being able to have access. The wire rope barriers presenting some issues there. Do you have any comment on that? Obviously having to go further north to turn to come south or further south to turn to come north. Any comment on that design aspect in the whole highway length? Do you feel sufficient concern is being given to emergency vehicle access, to things like where you get a person in a single lane that actually has a breakdown or could catch fire - all sorts of things can happen in a single lane where you cannot get through.

Ms KING - Yes, that is the case that things can happen in a single lane. Could something happen in a single lane and people say that should have been a double lane? That could occur anywhere on a single lane each way.

CHAIR - He was commenting more about the policy of having wire rope barriers on each side of a single lane. That really does not leave much room to move for emergency vehicles to get to somebody who is obviously in a state of peril in the middle of the lane.

Mr TARBOTTON - We consider we do not design our highway for those extreme events. We consider them in our approach so emergency authorities have every authority to remove that barrier; they do not have to ask us - they can just do it. They are actually geared up and equipped to do that, and they are informed how to do that; that is their own training. If the emergency was for an extended duration, five hours as the man suggested, as a state road authority we would go and lower that barrier. We would be there within an hour, so to speak, and that would allow traffic to use the alternate lanes.

It is not as though we cannot cater for those events; we do not design for them because you cannot design for such extreme one-offs. It does get down to the frequency and the likelihood. How often would this occur? It will occur but it would be so infrequent that we cannot justify the expenditure for such an infrequent event.

CHAIR - You can remove the wires from the posts?

Mr TARBOTTON - You do not have to remove them; you drop them. You release them and drop them on the floor.

CHAIR - Dropped the wires down, but then you still have the posts in the way. Can those posts be removed?

Mr TARBOTTON - You can cut them off if you have to and they can be replaced, they get damaged every week. Yes, they can - if we have to, we would, but you can also drive the vehicle through them or over them.

Ms KING - To clarify, in an emergency situation such as a fatality, the road is under control of police. Police can and do instruct us but it is a police decision and it is police who choose whether they need the road closed for five hours so that they can undertake their

investigations for the fatality. We need to be clear about what the responsible authority is - it depends on what the emergency is and where it is - a fire in a paddock is a different situation to a fatality on road. A fatality on-road means the police are in control; they direct and we do what they tell us.

Mr SHELTON - For clarification, I have heard that example at previous public works meetings where the wire rope is designed to be lowered. There are several different designs - one slips in from the side and the authority or whatever it is can just run along and flip the top off them and lay the ropes on the road. It is not that simple, but the reality is the ropes can be lowered if emergency access through the rope is needed.

- 4.18 Mr Donald Jones noted that areas that had a single lane bound by flexible safety barriers with no areas to pullover would present difficulties for the movement of large agricultural machinery on the highway, particularly during harvesting season, and could increase traffic congestion:

Mr Donald JONES - One of the big issues on the single lane wire rope thing is the movement of agriculture equipment, particularly headers and big combines. They are slow moving and once they move into a single lane structure and there are no pull-off areas within those structures, all traffic, whether it is north- or southbound, has to stay behind the equipment until they reach where it can on the highway to pass, whether it is a kilometre line, and that is one of the major problems with agricultural equipment moving along the state road.

Ms RATTRAY - It is getting bigger and bigger, the equipment.

Mr Donald JONES - You have the wire barriers and a header that takes up the majority of the road. There is no passing it and there is no pull-off, so that is a major problem that has been aired by agricultural contractors and farmers themselves.

CHAIR - Can I get this clear? Are you saying that the single lane with the wire rope barrier on either side, they cannot negotiate that or that people cannot pass them when they are in that lane, where clearly it is not a passing lane?

Mr Donald JONES - No. The header will take up the majority of the highway, therefore the traffic within the bounds of that single lane will have to reduce to the probably 20 kilometres per hour of the tractor or header for the distance it has to travel. Contractors in Oatlands have had huge difficulty moving their headers from Oatlands to Tunbridge in this last season. At one stage they had to talk to the contractor to actually close part of the construction of the highway both ends so they could get their header through.

When the road is completed, it will be a major problem in that area of movement, particularly through the summer months when all the harvesting takes place.

Muddy Plains Road Intersection

- 4.19 The Committee noted there was no acceleration lane provided or planned to facilitate the entry of vehicles, particularly heavy vehicles, onto the Midland Highway from Muddy Plains Road and travelling north. It was noted that this may lead to a situation where heavy vehicles travelling at very low speeds are entering the highway into traffic travelling at high speed. The Committee sought further information on how the risks associated with this situation were being managed. The Department of State Growth witnesses indicated that the low volume of traffic exiting from Muddy Plains Road and the excellent sight distances at the intersection meant that entry on to the highway at this junction was very low risk and as such did not warrant additional safety treatment measures:

Ms BUTLER - ... My question is around the Muddy Plains Road and the single lane. As a truck or a vehicle would head north, certainly for the record, we would have potentially trucks pulling out onto that at 0 to 10 kilometres an hour with oncoming traffic of 110 kilometres an hour.

CHAIR - The traffic coming from the south at 110 kilometres an hour.

Ms BUTLER - Can you run through how you have navigated risk around that section and that potential problem?

Mr TARBOTTON - As a broad statement, whenever we undertake a road project we look at the volumes of traffic and the types of traffic - the percentage of heavy vehicles and how often they are using it. We then refer back to the Australian design guidelines, Austroads, or our internal, and we arrive at the best design that is suitable for those conditions. In this instance, we know that Muddy Plains road is a public access road. It is a low frequency use road both by light vehicles and heavy vehicles. That means the frequency of vehicles exiting that road and turning onto our highway is low. Consequently, the need for generous treatments is reduced. We have not provided a dedicated acceleration lane heading north for those vehicles exiting Muddy Plains Road because we believe the likelihood of encountering one is so low that we cannot justify the expenditure of public funds.

Ms BUTLER - Where do you gather that data from to justify not having an acceleration lane?

Mr TARBOTTON - We collect traffic statistics for all the state roads, particularly the Midland Highway and the larger highways. I do not have traffic statistics for Muddy Plains, it is anecdotal. We asked the landowners, we asked the general RACT, we might ask the stakeholders, that nature. Anecdotally, it is a very low frequency used road.

Ms KING - We also do an assessment of the number and the type of properties on Muddy Plains Road, or any side road. We look at what is upstream in terms of what is generating demand or generating volume. If, for example, there was a distillery up that road, an important tourism facility up that road, then we would obviously assess it differently and we may do more traffic counts on a side road where it is not clear what the usage would be. For these smaller roads off the Midland Highway we are comfortable that the assessment is valid.

Ms BUTLER - When it comes to risk, obviously the risk is based on frequency. There is still a risk that if a large vehicle or a truck moved onto that part of the highway and it will be a single lane there is really nowhere for that truck to go. There is nowhere for oncoming traffic to come and they are coming at 110 kilometres, that is if they are sticking to the road rules, and there is wire in the middle of that barrier too. So, really, it is a perfect storm that could be created there.

Ms KING - In this instance the sight lines are considerable and that ameliorates the risk. We need to put our public money into the highest risk locations. We are not able to eliminate all risk on the highway. Yes, you are correct.

Consultation

4.20 The Committee sought to understand what consultation had been undertaken on the project, and what concerns had been raised by stakeholders during consultation. Mr Tarbotton noted the consultation process undertaken across the entire Midland Highway upgrade program, and highlighted the feedback that had been received indicated that stakeholder concerns centred on the reduction in the length of the overtaking lanes and visibility when exiting properties:

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the heavy vehicle users of the road, what engagement have you had with the industry itself before you have gone down this path, particularly in reducing that overtaking or climbing lane scenario?

Mr TARBOTTON - I refer back to the more broader highway. This is one project of many projects and we liaise with all stakeholders as best we can. The heavy vehicle industry and the heavy vehicle association is one such stakeholder. Our design consultants that we engage across many projects do that liaison for us. We inform them of our intended outcomes and we ask them to provide feedback. That has been the extent, or the type, of engagement and liaison on this particular project.

Ms RATTRAY - With regard to that broader stakeholder engagement, can the committee be apprised of what engagement there has been and what feedback there has been from all stakeholders?

Mr TARBOTTON - There is a priority listing of stakeholders from key downwards. We focus our attention on those impacted by the project, so that is the adjacent landowners or if they are immediately impacted, we focus on them. The priority drops further down from that. We contact the RACT, which represents the general motorists within the state. We also contact the heavy vehicle industry whether it be the owners or the association, and we try to involve the general public through our website. We may not contact the general public but we certainly put the information on our website to, if they are interested, become informed.

Ms RATTRAY - Right down to the detail, Craig, of reducing from four lanes back to two plus one?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - They are well aware of that through the website?

Mr TARBOTTON - There is always going to be an interpretation of the information and we try to present this information clearly as we can. I cannot say that everybody interprets it the way that we would hope them to. I have had calls from the public who have felt that we are reducing the highway speed down to 70 kilometres per hour, which is not the case. We are starting an overtaking lane, or climbing lane, when heavy vehicles reach 70. Unfortunately, the public have interpreted that as the highway has been reduced to 70. Yes, we do provide detail, but how that is interpreted is often up to the individual.

Ms RATTRAY - I asked for the issues that were brought forward by the stakeholders.

Mr TARBOTTON - The issues that I am aware of are predominantly from the adjacent landowners. They have presented some concerns. The concerns presented to us are the reduction in lane lengths and the sight visibility as they exit properties. I will explain what the concerns were: the concerns are that the current overtaking lanes are being reduced and that is at a loss of functionality and at a loss of safety. I have explained that we have designed these climbing lanes so that they are within the national design guidelines. They will not or should not affect the functionality of the highway. I cannot guarantee that of course because it depends on the individual driver, but from design modelling it can be shown that the heavy vehicles will reach above average design speed when the lane starts. They should be at operating speed by the time the lane finishes. That is an average.

The adjacent landowner feels that these lanes should be longer. I can understand that. But I can say that the current lane lengths are beyond what we consider desirable - that does not mean they are not fantastic, they are. From a design perspective, and we used the national design guide called Austroads, there is a length called the desirable length - it could be not just length but desirable sight distances, desirable length, desirable speed. That is the preferred. The current lane lengths are beyond that, meaning they are very generous. Our lane lengths are at the desirable. So we satisfy that and that is our constraint. We try to achieve that. Anything beyond that becomes unnecessary.

- 4.21 Mr McShane, as a significant landowner along the Midland Highway, had previously been impacted by and consulted on earlier Midland Highway upgrade projects. Mr McShane made the point that, in his experience, the current consultation process was different to what he had previously encountered. Mr McShane indicated that based on his previous experiences, the changes had not led to an improved consultation process:

Mr McSHANE - ... The fact is, the consultation ... of this project has been much different to other projects that we have dealt with in the past. State Growth seems to have outsourced consultation to the engineers. Jacobs, the engineers, were tasked to do the consultation, which ends up not being consultation at all. It is, 'Okay, tell us what you think so I can type that up'. Then that goes to State Growth and they do a reply.

That is not consultation. That is not sitting at a table with someone discussing options, discussing concerns. That is not consultation. That has been where this has fallen. Why I am here even saying this is, in previous projects we have had consultation. We have had consultation with State Growth and they have set parameters around things on how they want to do things, and we have said well okay can you give us another option, they have given us other options and we have thrown things across the table. That has not been the case with this. They have outsourced consultations to Jacobs and that has not worked at all. It has not been real consultation. It has not worked.

CHAIR - *Okay, you are saying it has not been two-way consultation.*

Mr McSHANE - *Yes. You need to have the consultation with the person who is doing the design, not a third party who is just sending a message, you basically send something and then they do a response of okay, but, but, this, this and this, and it all fits the guidelines.*

- 4.21 Based on Mr McShane's evidence, the Committee was keen to explore how consultation had been undertaken and by whom, how the consultation process had changed from previous works, and what mechanisms were employed to ensure ongoing improvements were made to the process:

CHAIR - *..... Would you explain exactly who was consulted with regard to this?.....And indeed whether it was only an advising of the project as opposed to a proper one-on-one consultation.*

Ms RATTRAY - *Particularly given the comments made by Mr McShane around the engineer appearing to be undertaking the consultation process. I certainly hope that was not the case, but you will let me know.*

Mr TARBOTTON - *.....Yes, we are outsourcing our stakeholder engagement to our consultants. Yes, previously the State Government and State Roads undertook the stakeholder engagement. That is correct. Yes, it is correct that at times an engineer will go to landowners and undertake consultation.*

I say here that we are endeavouring to improve, and we are outsourcing to our consultants because we wish to improve our performance, and it is a process. We do not have it right yet, but we are trying to get it better.

It is disappointing to hear that Andrew feels we have not consulted; he might be correct and we will take that away and talk with our consultants. Our consultants are here today so they have heard very clearly what the landowner thinks. We will go away and we will take it on board.

Ms KING - *On that stakeholder engagement, the requirement on our consultants now is that they provide stakeholder engagement specialists who are not engineers, who are people-people. Occasionally engineers, and I am one, are accused of not being people-people. We are really clearly stating that the stakeholder and community engagement is a specialised skill. It is a skill we have in the department, but we do not have enough numbers of those specialists in the department to be able to implement all the projects we have across the department. That is why we are using external providers who are skilled in this area.*

CHAIR - *You don't see it as an opportunity for the learnings they get by going through these processes from time to time to be fully passed back to the department so the department is actually missing out on what has been brought forward there for future projects?*

Ms KING - *I understand the question. There are a couple of things. One is that when the stakeholders are unhappy, that is always escalated to the department. We are always clear on that. We have individual project conversations with the consultants where they raise issues.*

We meet with our consultants at a whole-of-business, not only whole-of-project, level regularly. We hold consultant workshops with all representatives of, at the moment, five core businesses that work for us come, and we talk openly about issues that are working or not working. We also run individual project debriefs.

We have a number of mechanisms by which we can identify, 'Oh this thing that perhaps did not go so well, is that particular to that project or that individuals. or are we seeing a theme here? Do we need to improve our processes and the manner in which we work?' I believe we have a number of mechanisms to get that feedback yet.

- 4.22 The Committee noted that the mechanisms described appeared to be ex post, and would not help alleviate the concerns expressed about the consultation process on this project. The Department of State Growth witnesses again assured the Committee they had heard and understood the concerns raised and they would be taken on board:

Ms RATTRAY - *It appears to me that this is all after the event, though - here we have a project that appears not to have had that adequate consultation. It is fantastic to take on the learnings, but that is not going to help this project and the people who are stakeholders with this project.*

Mr TARBOTTON - *It is a learning process. I know it is one of the catchphrases people use but we learn all the time. We are learning and we have created a stakeholder engagement framework which we are socialising to our consultants. This is to try to improve the quality and to get to a common quality. This project is not finished; our stakeholder consultation is not finished.*

Ms RATTRAY - *I am getting the feeling that this is not finished.*

Mr TARBOTTON - *But a project is never finished. Even once the construction is completed, we have interactions with stakeholders for many years. I have to say, often our communication and interaction with landowners are not well done.....*

Ms KING - *We do not hear that very often.*

Mr TARBOTTON - *For doing that there are challenges. They do not stop and it is all about taking away after the event what a person has said and somehow improving it. We can only improve when people say, 'You have not done well'; we do hear that and we try to improve.*

Ms RATTRAY - *Here is an opportunity - this is only about halfway through - to get that stakeholder engagement where you are talking about those learnings back into action before there is a shovel-ready process.*

Mr TARBOTTON - *There is a consultant here today with us who has heard everything the panel has said and the landowner and the stakeholder. I can guarantee you that they have heard clearly what you have said, and so have we, so there is a learning and we have taken that away.*

- 4.23 Ms Kylie Donaghy, representing the Tasmanian Farmer and Graziers Association (TFGA), sought an assurance from the Department of State Growth that the TFGA would be consulted on future Midland Highway upgrade projects:

Ms DONAGHY - *... .. The TFGA would like the committee to ask State Growth on our behalf to open up a consultation process about these and all future works via a submission process so that we are able to consult with our members and their neighbours who are actually affected by these works, to put their view forward and their position, regarding this issue.*

CHAIR - *I am led to believe they canvass local landowners but you are saying TFGA -*

Ms DONAGHY - *I want the TFGA to have some input and consultation or the opportunity - if we could ask whether that would be an opportunity we could have.*

CHAIR - *Okay, I will put that to them and see what the situation is there.*

- 4.24 In response to questioning from the Committee, the Department of State Growth witnesses confirmed that the TFGA would be included in any consultation conducted on future works that may impact upon TFGA members:

CHAIR - *If we can move onto some of the other concerns. The TFGA was wanting to be notified of projects affecting farmers.*

Ms KING - *We have heard that, yes.*

CHAIR - *You are happy to undertake that in the future?*

Ms KING - *Yes.*

Does the Project Meet Identified Needs and Provide Value for Money?

4.25 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks assurance that each project is a good use of public funds and meets identified needs. The Chair sought and received an assurance from the witnesses that the proposed works were addressing an identified need in a cost effective manner and were a good use of public funds:

CHAIR - *... .. Does the proposed works meet an identified need or needs or solve a recognised problem?*

Ms KING - *Yes.*

CHAIR - *Are the proposed works the best solution to meet identified needs or solve a recognised problem within the allocated budget?*

Ms KING - *Yes.*

CHAIR - *Are the proposed works fit for purpose?*

Ms KING - *Yes.*

CHAIR - *Do the proposed work provide value for money?*

Ms KING - *Yes.*

CHAIR - *Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?*

Ms KING - *Yes.*

5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

5.1 The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- *Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan - Melton Mowbray to North of Lovely Banks*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, May 2019, Transport Infrastructure Services, Department of State Growth;
- Response from the Department of State Growth to the Committee's request for additional information, dated 26 July 2019; and
- Response from the Department of State Growth to the Committee's second request for additional information, dated 8 August 2019.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. The proposed works will improve safety outcomes by providing safe overtaking opportunities and a central flexible safety barrier to prevent head on collisions. The proposed works will also facilitate safer access to adjacent land by upgrading the Lovely Banks property access and Lovely Banks Road junction. Once completed, the proposed works will contribute to a safer driving experience along the length of the Midland Highway, by delivering a road environment that is consistent with that being provided under the Midland Highway 10 year Action Plan.
- 6.2 The Committee is also pleased to note that the Department of State Growth has redesigned and extended the southbound overtaking lane near the Lovely Banks property, in response to the evidence presented by stakeholders at the public hearing.
- 6.3 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the *Midland Highway 10-year Action Plan - Melton Mowbray to Lovely Banks* project, at an estimated cost of \$17.7 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

**Parliament House
Hobart
11 September 2019**

**Hon. Rob Valentine MLC
Chair**

